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The President's Daily Brief

27 January 1970

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Top Secret

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

27 January 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In northern Laos Communist preparations for an offensive in the Plaine des Jarres area appear to be nearing completion. *(Page 1)*

The movement of supplies through the Laos panhandle for Communist forces in South Vietnam is in high gear. *(Page 2)*

The absence of Brezhnev and Chief of State Podgorny from public view for 37 days has set the Moscow rumor mill in motion. *(Page 3)*

Japan will probably sign the Nonproliferation Treaty within the week. *(Page 4)*

In the former Biafran enclave federal officers are trying to restore discipline among their troops. *(Page 5)*

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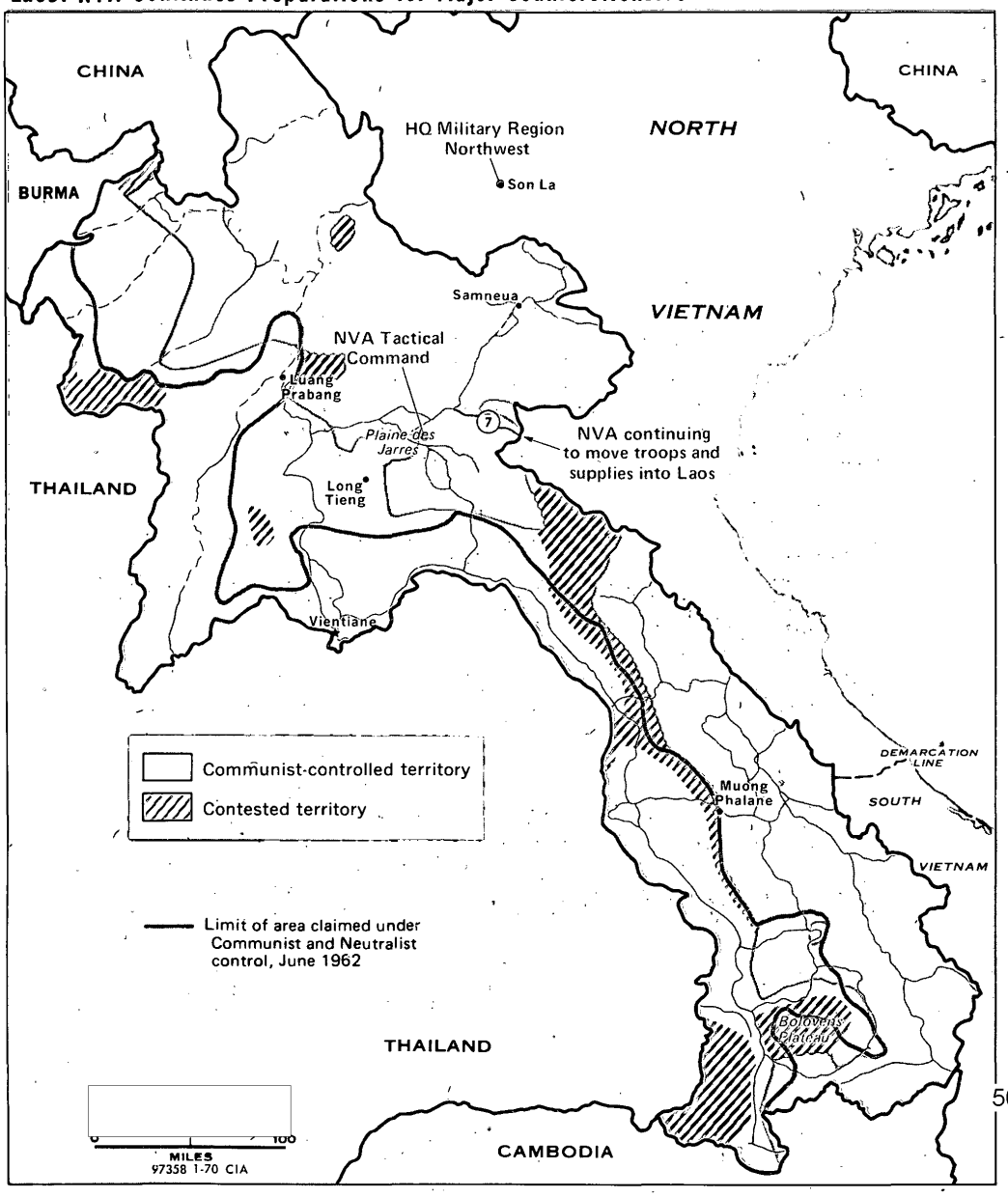
Laos: NVA Continues Preparations for Major Counteroffensive



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LAOS

Communist preparations for a major offensive in the Plaine des Jarres appear to be nearing completion. [redacted] 50X1 messages have been passed between the North Vietnamese tactical command near the Plaine and a senior military command inside North Vietnam at Son La. This is almost certainly concerned with final planning for a major ground thrust against the Plaine.

The North Vietnamese also continue to pour troops and supplies into northern Laos. According to a message of 17 January, highest priority was to be given to ammunition and explosives--a strong indication that preparations for the offensive are in their final stage. Apparently to insure the rapid movement of high priority cargo, Hanoi is bringing 1,150 more combat engineers into Laos. Also, intercepts indicate that an important vehicle convoy, possibly including tanks, is nearing the Plaine des Jarres area.

The scope of present enemy preparations, the largest ever detected in northern Laos, may cause the Souvanna Phouma government to question seriously the wisdom of holding the Plaine "at all costs." A high toll in Meo casualties would undermine the government's only effective fighting force. The Meo units are needed to defend politically more sensitive areas closer to the capital, especially General Vang Pao's headquarters at Long Tieng.

There is no evidence of a comparable Communist build-up in the south. The Communists apparently intend to limit their military activity in the panhandle to hit and run raids and rocket attacks this dry season. Such tactics would effectively tie down government troops, precluding their possible use in the north.

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LAOS - SOUTH VIETNAM

The Communist logistics drive in the Laos Panhandle has been in high gear since early December. By now, significant quantities of supplies should be reaching South Vietnam.

Although no overall figure for supplies moved south is available, one key logistics unit received, during a ten-day period this month, four times as much as it did in all of January 1969. Foodstuffs make up the bulk of identified supplies, but arms and ammunition account for about 18 percent of identified shipments so far this month, as compared with 12 percent for the same period last year.

Intercepted messages frequently mention destruction of trucks and death of personnel from US bombings in the panhandle. Units of the 559th Transport Group this year are again being told to use false lights, dummy trucks, and other deceptive measures to reduce the effectiveness of air strikes. The Communists have recently deployed surface-to-air missiles to southern North Vietnam close to main panhandle logistic routes.

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SOVIET UNION

Rumors of instability within the Soviet leadership are circulating in Moscow. Soviet party boss Brezhnev and Chief of State Podgorny have been out of sight for 37 days. Brezhnev, however, continues to be mentioned in the press, and both he and Podgorny have been listed as signatories of ceremonial messages.

We are now checking [redacted] 50X1
[redacted] *on the* 50X1
whereabouts of these two Soviet leaders.

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JAPAN

Prime Minister Sato is finally getting around to signing the Nonproliferation Treaty. He could have approval from the cabinet and all others concerned by the end of this week--in plenty of time to have the treaty signed before it goes into force early in February.

Sato will have no trouble getting approval for signing the treaty. Formal ratification by the Diet is another thing entirely and could take a long time. Major problems must yet be resolved at high levels of Sato's government.

Sato's sudden burst of speed seems to stem from his desire to be in step with the major powers and to demonstrate Japan's agreement in principle before Somalia deposits its instruments of ratification, the act which will bring the treaty into effect.

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NOTE

Nigeria: Federal officers are trying to prevent further deterioration in discipline among the troops occupying the former Biafran enclave. Looters have been executed, and some improvement in discipline can already be seen. Lagos is also moving more federal policemen into the occupied area, but it will probably be some time before the Nigerians feel able to return troops to garrisons or withdraw them altogether. Meanwhile, federal authorities are working harder to move in relief supplies; serious food distribution problems persist.

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